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A LOVE SONG
By Otto J. Schneider



GALLERY OF ETCHINGS
Plate One

BRUSH AND PENCIL

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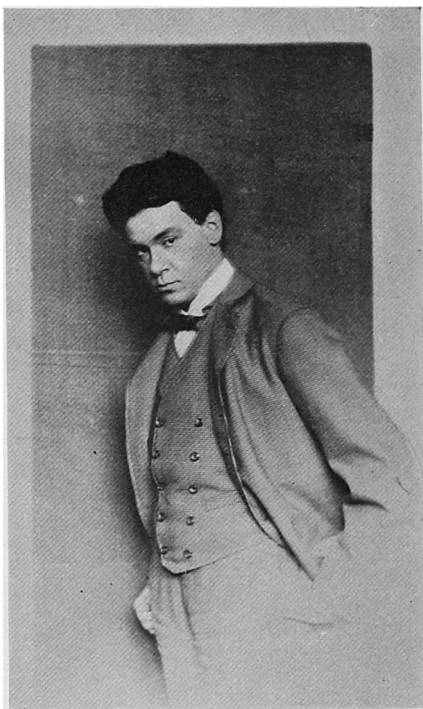
No. 2

THE ETCHINGS OF OTTO J. SCHNEIDER

The development of etching in America since its early beginnings under Dunlap, White, Brown, and Falconer has been especially marked, and the roll of honor in the art is one of which Americans may justly be proud. Whistler, the Morans, Farrer, Smillie, Church, Gifford, Duveneck, Platt, Blum, Dielman, and threescore or more other artists whose names are familiar to the art-loving public, have done notable work, and to-day a new body of aspirants for distinction with the needle is doing work no less full of promise. Among these latter is Otto J. Schneider, who in the last year or two has produced upward of twenty plates, some of which are remarkable both in fineness of conception and in excellence of execution.

Mr. Schneider's name is little known as yet in art circles, though in the ranks of newspaper illustrators he has long had an enviable reputation. Retiring in disposition and an indefatigable worker, he has, partly from choice and partly from necessity, kept aloof from the public and devoted himself arduously to the performance of his routine duties as a newspaper worker and to his pet diversion, etching.

He was born in Atlanta, Illinois, and is now little more than



OTTO J. SCHNEIDER

twenty-five years of age. In his twelfth year he moved with his family to Chicago, where he soon disclosed a taste for sketching. Barring a short period of instruction in the Art Institute of Chicago,



CARMEN

By Otto J. Schneider

his education in his favorite line has been self-acquired. He left the Institute school to make his livelihood as an illustrator, and has been more or less regularly employed in the art departments of various metropolitan dailies ever since.

His work as an etcher is a direct outgrowth of his newspaper sketching. He was not satisfied with the harsher lines of his reproduced pen-and-ink drawings and he soon undertook to produce a finer class of work. His interest in etching, when once he had begun to use the needle, was such

that he became an enthusiast, and for a time even abandoned daily newspaper work in order to devote more time to experiments on copper and acquire greater proficiency as an etcher.

His ideas, however, of the financial possibilities of etching proved too roseate, and he was forced to go back to the drudgery of daily assignments. His best work as an etcher has therefore been done at odd times, mainly in the mornings before going to the office where he is employed.

Some one has said that Whistler and Venice have been the inspiration of present-day etchers. This is not the case with Mr. Schneider. His adult life has been spent in a new and eminently commercial city, whose name has too often unjustly been taken as the symbol of the inartistic, and his master, so far as he claims one,

is rather Mr. Edwin A. Abbey than the acknowledged chief of etchers. He has studied Abbey closely, and acknowledges that he has been influenced by him in no small degree. He is, however, a person of strong individuality, and the work of Abbey has been rather a suggestion of possibilities and methods of treatment than an influence likely to jeopardize personal traits.

Thus far Mr. Schneider has essayed nothing in landscape, nor has he undertaken to depict any of those odd nooks and corners that have been the delight of the painter-etchers. His work has been entirely on the line of figure studies, and all his plates are characterized by grace, delicacy, and sentiment rather than by unusual strength of line or by a massive working-in of details. He has, further, not attempted to etch with acid, which has had such a fascination for many of the best contemporary etchers. His plates, therefore, while they lack the peculiar charm of the irregular outlines bitten by the mordant, have yet the smooth, rich, velvety characteristics that are most in keeping with the class of subjects he has treated.

The special features of an etching which lend it artistic value are absolute freedom of line, so-called warmth of tone, and wide range of color, varying from the faintest gray to the deepest velvety black. The needle, too, gives wide opportunities to the artist to improvise and to produce delicate effects, since it plays on the copper surface



A PORTRAIT
By Otto J. Schneider



THE FLOWER
By Otto J. Schneider

with even less friction than a pen does on paper. The lines also differ vastly in kind from those obtained by ordinary engraving, and if only due regard is had to the limitations of the art, results can be produced that can be obtained by no other process.

Schneider early recognized both the possibilities and the limitations of the dry-point, and all his work shows a studied conformity to accepted principles. His plates, for the most part, are not highly worked-up. They are sketchy, suggestive, and are admirable illustrations of the economy of labor. A few words printed some years ago of etching in general may here be quoted as applying directly to Mr. Schneider in his best work. Says the writer:

"When we begin to examine etched work in particular examples, we shall prize most highly those prints in which its characteristic qualities are most perfectly exhibited, its limitations most loyally respected—since, as Mr. Hamerton well says, an art is at its best when most thoroughly itself. Those etchings which are the freest and most personal in handling and the richest in color, and in

which the line is most strongly and expressively employed, will be the finest. Of course, as in all other arts, so with this one, there is something more than technical skill to be considered; there is the idea which it expresses or the sentiment which it interprets. But as etching is not an imitative art, even to the comparative degree in which some arts may be so esteemed, as it is the most boldly and frankly interpreted of all graphic modes,—original, valuable ideas must have existed where really fine workmanship is seen. . . .

"An etcher who speaks strongly must speak concisely, significantly, rapidly, and if I may so express it, typically or symbolically. Therefore, he must be possessed of a clear idea of the things he wants to say, looking to it that they are not so many as to confuse or so alien as to confound his peculiar form of speech. And so it is that when we see in an etching really strong and individual workmanship, it vouches for intellectual qualities as well—it presupposes by its very existence clear individual ideas or characteristic sentiments in the etcher, with

the presence of the high artistic powers to which I have just referred—the power of analysis, condensation, and interpretation. It was his recognition of these facts which made Jules Dupré exclaim: 'Artists paint on their good days and their bad, but etch on their good ones only.'"

These statements may be accepted as truisms, and the principles they express are well exemplified by Mr. Schneider's best work. Technically the difficulties to be overcome in etching are not great, but there is no royal step to excellence, and one would naturally expect to find some of Mr. Schneider's plates betraying the novice.



ALICE
By Otto J. Schneider

While in the main his lines are free and graceful, he has manifestly at times failed to convey the fullness of sentiment he wished to depict. But despite the fact that some of his plates are somewhat amateurish, it would be difficult in the productions of the younger

etchers of the day to find two more admirable pieces of work than his "Voices" and "A Love Song," herewith reproduced. His "The Flower" is another well-conceived and well-executed example of dry-point work.

These plates are full of sentiment and meaning. They all have a central idea that is sufficient warrant for the picture. Like Paul Helleu, the French etcher, Schneider has made a specialty of female faces and figures. He has, however, not been content with a mere portrait, however winsome, but has incorporated some thought or sentiment to give added value to the work. This is well exemplified in the three plates named above, "Voices," "The Love Song," and "The Flower," in each of which meditation, reminiscence, a mood, is etched in its pleasing lines.

The artist never essays to portray mere beauty.

He rather catches a moment, impressive and worth depicting. His selection of subjects has thus been determined rather by the opportunities they afforded for the expression of delicate sentiment than by the possibilities offered for the etching of mere graceful lines. Schneider is too serious for his pictures to be piquant, and too thoughtful and sentimental for them to be fashion-plates for the display of coiffures and drapery.



AN IDLE HOUR
By Otto J. Schneider



VOICES
By Otto J. Schneider



GALLERY OF ETCHINGS
Plate Two

Half the beauty of an etching is in its suggestion, and no highly worked-up plate has the charm of one which leaves the imagination to fill in the details that are merely hinted at. In this regard Schneider invariably sins on the right side. He uses few lines more than are necessary to convey the idea he wishes to express. "The Love Song," used as the frontispiece of this magazine, is his most carefully worked-up plate, yet it will be noticed that no details are used further than are necessary to give the proper values of light and shade to the picture. In it, as in "Voices," plain paper, with but a hint of a line in the less detailed portions of the plate, is left to tell its share of the story.

For this class of subjects the dry point, by its clear-cut, decisive stroke, gives the richest effects, and Mr. Schneider shows his wisdom in abstaining from the use of acid until he is prepared temporarily to abandon the sentimental side

of female character for the more rugged but no less sentimental side of landscape or picturesque architecture, in which the minute irregularities eaten into the plate by the acid give the lines a charm that



THE PORTFOLIO
By Otto J. Schneider

would be nothing less than a defect in such subjects as he has hitherto treated.

As yet none of Mr. Schneider's etchings have been placed upon the market. He has regarded his work largely as experimental, and

has been diffident about offering to the public work produced in his efforts to master his art. His cartoons and sketches, rapidly executed for reproduction by zinc-etching for newspaper purposes, have been the commercial side of his professional life. Etching has simply been his delight, his avocation, wholly apart from all considerations, after his first unfortunate experiment in abandoning a lucrative position in furtherance of a pet ambition, of making his needle a source of revenue. Being free from all taint of commercialism, his art will doubtless remain, as it has been, an expression of his best moments and his highest ideals.



THE DREAMER
By Otto J. Schneider

Art has much to expect from Mr. Schneider. True, it is one of his bitter regrets that the necessities of subsistence require him to devote the major part of his time to the making of drawings that are seen for a moment and then cast into the waste-basket with the last hour's news. It is more than likely, however, that this may be a benefit rather than a detriment, and that the vocation may foster the avocation, as has been the case with many an artist who has attained distinction with the needle.

MORRIS T. EVERETT.